

## PREFACE

For a small group to remain powerful for God's kingdom and life changing for the members, every small group leader should ask himself or herself some tough questions:

“Is my small group healthy?”

“Is my group thriving, surviving, or declining?”

“Is my group in missional or maintenance mode?”

These are excellent questions. However, they raise a few more: How do you know if your group is healthy or not? How are you gauging the vitality of your small group?

Much of the time, leaders just make assumptions, go with a gut feeling, compare their group to another group, or just don't care. The truth is that small groups are too important to God and everyone involved to gauge health on wishful thinking, poor comparisons, or a “whatever” attitude.

In my role as a small groups pastor, I wanted to know if the small groups at my church were healthy, and our lead pastor wanted to know as well. Neither of us wanted to make uneducated guesses or assumptions. And, more significantly, we wanted a solid growth plan for helping our groups become as healthy, vibrant, and strong as they could be. Last year, we surveyed all our small groups in order to coach and equip them based on the results. This took months of planning and follow-up.

You may be asking yourself, “Why go to all the trouble to conduct a survey and analyze data on top of everything else going on in the small group ministry?” We did all this because God created the world in such a way that healthy things grow and reproduce themselves.

**Healthy things grow.  
Growing things change.  
Change challenges us.  
Challenges cause us to  
trust God. Trust leads to  
obedience. Obedience  
makes us healthy.  
And healthy things grow.<sup>1</sup>**

As a small group minister, coach, and consultant, I've noticed that many groups in churches all over America are not growing or reproducing. When I see or hear about lackluster groups, I always think, "Why do many small groups settle for average or 'just good-enough' meetings led by ordinary leaders who have a listless spiritual life?" I can only imagine you understand what I'm referring to here. These are groups that have a typical Bible study on comfy couches, while the members engage in the usual and expected conversations about the text. Truth be told, many small groups have drifted into mediocrity and have settled in as a "nice little group" for armchair Christians.

Stop and think about this "nice little group." As I've described it, does it sound like something your next-door neighbor would want to join? Will a group like this make a big impact on our world? I don't think so. Stagnant, plateaued, and narcissistic groups are not healthy and they don't create an environment for life transformation. They will not change the world. And worst of all, they dishonor God.

This is the main reason I wrote this book. I believe God can and will use healthy small group communities to change the world, one life at a time. But this will not go unopposed. One of Satan's main strategies is to convince Christians to play it safe, settle for unexceptional results, and aim for comfort. I don't want to see small groups give in to Satan's corruption and watered down schemes, and I hope you feel the same way.

In the pages that follow, I've outlined a God-given battle plan for helping your group become healthy so you can move out on mission together and live a powerful, exceptional life in Christ.

This is a war for souls . . . our souls and millions who don't yet know Christ as Lord. It's time to ask hard questions about our groups, make changes, and thereby harness the power of biblical community to send Satan's minions back to hell with their tails between their legs.